

THE BUILDINGS BILL AND THE MASTER CARPENTERS.

A THIRD meeting of the committee on the above bill was very fully attended at the Freemasons' Tavern on the 24th ult.—Mr. Biers in the chair—when the committee went through the present bill from the 40th section to the 73rd. The chairman read several communications from parties who considered themselves aggrieved under the provisions of the present bill, and particularly the following letter from Mr. J. T. Merrick:—

"Sir,—I beg to call your attention, as chairman of the Committee of the Master Carpenters' Society on the Metropolitan Buildings Bill, to that clause of the Act restricting the size of factories.

Having occasion to erect a manufactory for paper-hangings, which require a building of certain dimensions, I contracted with her Majesty's Commissioners of Woods and Forests for the largest plot of ground in New Oxford-street, and I have erected thereon a manufactory, under the superintendence of my own surveyor and the surveyor to her Majesty's commissioners.

I gave instructions to my surveyor to draw his plans for a building suitable for my tables and machinery, and at the same time to study the health and comfort of a large body of workmen, by having well-ventilated and lofty workshops; by so doing the cubical contents exceeded the limits required by the Act. I proceeded with my building under the impression that the official referees would modify the Act, as they have power to do, and allow of the improvement I had made. Such, however, has not been the case; and I have the satisfaction of knowing that had I made the stories of my building 2 feet less in height, it would have been built according to the Act of Parliament, and approved: in other words, had I erected low and confined workshops, which would have been inconvenient for the purpose I was erecting the building, as I require light and air for the manufacture of paper-hangings, and endangered the health of the workpeople, the building would have been perfectly in accordance with the Act of Parliament, whereas now it is condemned as a nuisance. The total height is even now less than the limits prescribed, but the superficial area, which is regulated by my tables and machinery, makes the cubical contents rather more than the 200,000 feet.

I may add, that my building has been surveyed and approved by the surveyor of her Majesty's Woods and Forests; it has also been surveyed and approved by the surveyor to three of the principal insurance offices in London, and is insured even at a less rate than many workshops in the trade.

I trust that the Committee of the Master Carpenters' Society will endeavour to obtain an amendment for so arbitrary and unnecessary an enactment, and one so prejudicial to the manufacturing interest of London. I shall be happy to shew you, or the committee, my premises at any time you may appoint."

A hope was expressed that parties who have really felt an annoyance, or what might, by any reasonable person, be deemed an unnecessary restriction, would forward to this committee such statements as might lead to a consideration of any point that may require amendment.*

Adjourned to Wednesday, the 10th inst.

DEPÔT FOR INVENTIONS CONNECTED WITH BUILDING.—"A Subscriber" says, "I have reason to believe it would prove very advantageous, not only to professional men, but also to the inventors and builders, if there was some central exhibition-room for the deposit of all inventions, and every thing connected with architecture and building, that parties could go in and inspect, with the several prices and prospectuses attached to them, rather than have to walk all over London to see what might be found useful or ornamental in a building. Could not a portion of such an edifice as they are now erecting for the Economic and Geological Institution be combined with it, and which will contain so much that is practically useful?"

* On the 1st inst. Mr. M. Furber asked in the House of Commons if it was the intention of the Government to bring in a bill to amend the Buildings Act introduced last session. —Lord Morpeth said, the amendments in the Metropolitan Buildings Act had been for some time under revision, and he was in hopes of being soon able to bring in a bill on the subject.

WHAT IS DOING IN LONDON, AND WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE

SIR,—As you kindly inserted my letter on the importance of a general scheme for the entire renovation of the whole of the metropolis, I take the liberty of again addressing you on the same subject; for really, the more I hear and see of the mis-called improvements that are, and have been, going on in London, and more particularly in the city, the more I become convinced that a different system must be adopted, or (to quote from Mr. Seeley's speech at the late meeting in Farringdon Without) "In ten years London will become like what Bartholomew fair used to be; nobody will go into it that can keep out, and when once in, a man's first effort will be to get out." In proof of this I will just mention some of the streets in the city, the widening of which the corporation have commenced. They are as follows:—Threadneedle-street, Gresham-street, Thames-street, Watling-street, Newgate-street, Butcher-hall-lane, Angel-street, the bottom of Holborn-hill, Fetter-lane, and Chancery-lane. Now, I do not object to any of these on the ground of utility, but simply on account of the great length of time they have all been in hand; and if they are left for the corporation to complete, about the middle of next century will be a moderate calculation of the time when they will all be finished. With the funds at their disposal, one would suppose that it would be the endeavour of the city corporation to carry out speedily what they have commenced, instead of which they are about to attempt two more "crooked lanes," viz., one from the west end of Cannon-street to Queen-street, or rather (which is the real object of the line), to Southwark-bridge, and another (for which an Act was obtained last session) from Tudor-street to Temple-street, across the end of Dorset-street, and which, by the bye, seems to make very little progress, like the rest.

In order that the public should have the benefit of improvements, some of which I grant are good in themselves, they should be carried out in a liberal and spirited manner; and the latter condition, at least, is at present an impossibility within the narrow boundaries of this narrow-minded city. I do not mean to say that outside the city these things are unexceptionally managed, but they are certainly better contrived, and when once commenced they are carried out within a reasonable time. New Oxford-street, for instance, which is one of the best lines of streets that has been formed in the metropolis, is decidedly too narrow; and an opportunity has also been lost for widening the narrow thoroughfare which runs by St. Giles's Church. Endell-street, too, is so much after the style of the city streets, that one would almost suppose it had been formed by the corporation. But the tardiness with which this street has been carried out is accounted for in some measure by the fact, that the greater portion of the property through which it runs belongs to the Mercers' Company. Of the improvements (I make use of this term, because it is generally understood to mean new streets, although it is in many cases a misnomer) now going forward in Westminster and Whitechapel, not having been in either neighbourhoods very recently I cannot say much; but that I have not formed a very high opinion of the former scheme, and that the latter is not progressing quite so fast as might be wished. However, the faults in these only shew more clearly the necessity of one efficient directing body, with ample funds at their disposal, and with one definite object in view, viz., the improvement of the whole of London in the best and quickest manner, so that those who pay for the improvements might have the benefit of them.

With regard to the necessary funds, I will again quote from Mr. Seeley's excellent speech at the meeting in Farringdon-without; he says:—"The sum of 20,000*l.* mortgaged by the corporation would not amount to 1,000,000*l.* in fifty years. If there was no other way of raising the amount necessary for improvements, he would rather bear a little taxation than allow things to remain as they were." "He would have a large sum to meet a great and comprehensive scheme of improvement, and instead of mortgaging the 20,000*l.* a year which the corporation proposed to sacrifice for this plant, he would re-

tain that sum for the purpose of effecting small alterations year by year, such as the widening and improvement of streets, courts, and lanes, and other useful and beneficial objects which were constantly requiring attention."

I regret to say that the corporation have applied to Parliament for an Act to carry out their narrow-minded purposes, and that their bill is amongst the list of unopposed bills, so that although their plan when first propounded was so generally condemned, I believe it is not likely to meet with the least opposition in the House, and I am not aware that a single petition has been presented against it. I hope it is not now too late for this. In order to relieve the principal thoroughfares between the City and West-end, I consider that two lines of street are wanted, viz., one from London-bridge to Saint Paul's Church-yard, and the other, already urged in THE BUILDER, from the end of Cheapside to the end of Long-acre; the first would relieve Cheapside, and the second Fleet-street and the Strand. In addition to these, the Poultry should be widened, a viaduct formed from Holborn-hill to Snow-hill, Middle-row pulled down, Fleet-street widened from St. Dunstan's Church to Chancery-lane, and the Strand widened at the back or rather side of St. Mary's Church, somewhat in the same manner as round St. Clement's Church.

It has been often suggested that Temple-bar should be pulled down, but I do not think any good would be attained by that measure, as it would give very little more roadway, and it would be needlessly destroying a remnant of antiquity, whereas if it remains, it might be made of great use to foot passengers (particularly to the ladies) as a means of crossing Fleet-street, if a staircase were formed on each side of the street, for which purpose it would only be necessary to pull down the adjoining houses on each side.

When once the improvement of the whole of London is in the hands of one body, I think they may effect a great deal of good by altering the names of some of the streets, the great number of which of the same name causes endless confusion; for instance, King William-street in the City, and King William-street in the Strand, often get confounded, and the same with Russell-street, Covent Garden, and Russell-street, Bloomsbury; Wellington-street, Strand, and Wellington-street, Borough. Perhaps some of your readers may not be aware that there are upwards of seventy John-streets in London, forty-seven James-streets, fifty-two King-streets, forty-four New-streets, forty-six Queen-streets, thirty York-streets, fifteen Wellington-streets, twelve Grove-streets, and the like number of many others. These numbers I should say, are not taken from a very recent list, so that they are by this time considerably increased. A general alteration might certainly cause a little temporary inconvenience, but by writing up the old and the new name at first, that would be soon got over, and the great advantage of having only one street of the same name would soon be apparent to every body.

Another project which I think ought to be carried out either by or under the control of the proposed improvement commission (or by whatever other cognomen they may be distinguished), is the formation of a line of railway which should completely encircle London (crossing the Thames twice), so as to connect all the railways which diverge from London. This grand connecting line should be formed at whatever distance from the centre of the metropolis is thought expedient (by the commission), say seven, eight, or ten miles. This plan, if acted upon, would do away with the necessity for any of the great variety of zig-zag lines which are continually being proposed (and in some cases carried out) to meet a crying evil.

The proposed railway street through Westminster furnishes a very good idea, which might be very well acted upon in the present case. In this scheme it is proposed to form an open cutting, with four lines of wooden rails, and a double set of rails to each line, one of the broad and the other of the narrow gauge, the whole to be worked on the atmospheric principle, and the banks to be planted with trees, and bridges to be built at the intersections of the roads. By these means an almost noiseless railway would be obtained,